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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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R 201045Z JAN 76
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7656
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 0091

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, IS, JO
SUBJ: WEST BANK'S FUTURE--CONVERSATION WITH ANWAR KHATIB

1. SUMMARY: FORMER JORDANIAN GOVERNOR OF JERUSALEM, ANWAR KHATIB, HAS JUST RETURNED FROM WEEK LONG VISIT TO AMMAN WHERE HE SAW KING HUSSEIN TWICE. KHATIB STATES: (1) HE WAS RECENTLY PRESSURED BY DEFMIN PERES TO BECOME LEADER OF A WEST BANK PALESTINIAN ADMINISTRATION, AN OFFER WHICH HE REFUSED; (2) PERES THREATENED WEST BANKERS WOULD HAVE REASON TO REGRET IF THEY DID NOT ACCEPT GOI'S SELF-ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL; AND (3) AFTER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN THE SPRING, GOI INTENDS TO CONFER ADDITIONAL POWERS ON WEST BANK MAYORS WITH OBJECT OF MAKING THEM, ON PAPER, CIVIL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS. KHATIB BELIEVES HUSSEIN'S SCHEME FOR A FEDERATED WEST BANK/EAST BANK STATE WILL EVENTUALLY BE ACCEPTED BY A MAJORITY OF THE ARAB STATES AND THE KING WILL BE GIVEN A TACIT MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE FOR SUCH A PROJECT. HE ALSO EXPRESSED FEAR THAT ISRAEL IN THE SPRING OR SUMMER WILL
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INITIATE MILITARY ACTION WITH A "GREEN LIGHT FROM THE U.S."

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END SUMMARY.

2. ANWAR KHATIB MET WITH ME AND DPO AT OUR INVITATION JAN 19. HE HAS JUST RETURNED FROM AMMAN WHERE HE HAD CONSULTATIONS WITH KING HUSSEIN (THIS IS ONLY HIS THIRD TRIP TO EAST BANK SINCE '67). SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE HE WAS CONVOKED BY DEFMIN PERES WHO URGED HIM IN STRONG TERMS TO ACCEPT LEADERSHIP OF A WEST BANK ARAB ADMINISTRATION. DURING TALK, PERES MADE REFERENCE TO "AUTONOMY," "SELF-ADMINISTRATION," "HOME RULE" AND "CIVIL GOVERNMENT." KHATIB REPLIED AS A LAWYER THESE TERMS HAD DIFFERENT MEANINGS AND HE ASKED PERES TO STATE MORE PRECISELY WHAT GOI HAD IN MIND. PERES' REPORTEDLY REPLY: "WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND."

3. PERES STATED UNLESS GOI'S SUGGESTIONS FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION BY WEST BANKERS IN THEIR ADMINISTRATON WERE ACCEPTED, ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES WOULD FOLLOW. AMONG THESE COULD BE GOI'S PERMISSION FOR ISRAELIS TO PURCHASE LAND IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, RESTRICTIONS ON CROSSING THE BRIDGES, AND OTHER VAGUE REFERENCES TO RESTRICTIONS. KHATIB SAID THAT, OF COURSE, HE REFUSED TO BE A PARTY TO ANY SUCH SCHEME. HE NOTED PERES, UNLIKE DAYAN WHEN LATTER FLOATED SIMILAR IDEAS, INDICATED GREATER LOCAL AUTONOMY WAS NOT RPT NOT A FINAL STEP.

4. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO UPCOMING WEST BANK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. (FOR DISCUSSION OF CHANGES IN ELECTORAL LAW SEE SEPTEL). KHATIB EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN THAT ISRAELIS, FRUSTRATED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ELICIT WEST BANK VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THEIR "SELFGOVERNMENT" PROJECT, HAD DECIDED AFTER THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TO CONFER ON MAYORS MUCH WIDER AUTHORITY THAN THEY NOW POSSESS. THIS WOULD, ON PAPER, GIVE MAYORS OF LARGER TOWNS SUCH AS NABLUS AND HEBRON, STATUS (IF NOT POWERS) OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS. IN KHATIB'S VIEW, ONLY HEBRON MAYOR SHEIKH JA'ABARI WOULD AGREE TO ACCEPT SUCH POWERS AT HANDS OF GOI.

5. CONCERNING THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES,KHATIB BELIEVES THAT, WHILE SOME OF THE FACES WILL BE CHANGED, THE TRADITIONAL WEST BANK ESTABLISHMENTS WILL MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THEIR LOCALITIES. HIS IMPRESSION ON BASIS OF RECENT CONVERSATION IS THAT SHEIKH
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JA'ABARI, IN SPITE OF HIS AGE AND UNCERTAIN HEALTH, WILL RUN FOR REELECTION. IN NABLUS, HE DOUBTS THAT HAMDI KANAAN WILL RUN FOR MAYOR ALTHOUGH HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SERVE AS A CITY COUNCILLOR. INCUMBENT MAYORS BALI OF JERICHO AND DARWISH OF EL BIREH HAVE TOLD HIM THAT THEY WILL NOT RUN FOR REELECTION. KHATIB CONFIRMS THAT THE PLO IS QUIETLY PUTTING FORWARD ITS CANIDATES. (HE BELIEVES ISRAELIS WILL CONFORM TO THEIR PAST PRACTICE OF NOT RPT NOT INTERFERING WITH ACTUAL BALLOTING. THIS

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OF COURSE, DOES NOT PRECLUDE ISRAELI MANEUVERS BEHIND THE SCENES)

6. CONCERNING FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, KHATIB IS OPTIMISTIC THAT BEFORE LONG A MAJORITY OF ARAB STATES WILL TACITLY AGREE THAT HUSSEIN SHOULD NEGOTIATE WITH A VIEW TO ESTABLISHING A FEDERATED STATE CONSISTING OF THE EAST AND WEST BANKS. HE SEEMED TO THINK THAT THE IMPROVEMENT IN HUSSEIN'S RELATIONS WITH ASAD WOULD FACILITATE THIS DEVELOPMENT. (KHATIB DISTRUSTS THE BAATHISTS.) KHATIB ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION OVER KING'S DECISION NOT TO HOLD PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON EAST BANK SINCE TO HAVE DONE SO WOULD HAVE MEANT SPLIT BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BANKS. WHEN QUERIED AS TO ARAFAT'S POSITION, KHATIB STATED THAT "NO PALESTINIAN" AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE COULD EVER SIGN A DOCUMENT GIVING AWAY PALESTINIANS' RIGHTS IN PRE-'67 ISRAEL. SINCE THE ARAB STATES HAD DECLARED WAR ON ISRAEL, IT WAS UP TO THE ARAB STATES TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL WITH THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT WHATEVER THEY AGREED WOULD BE "IMPOSED" ON THE PALESTINIANS. (HE GAVE IMPRESSION HE AND MANY WEST BANKERS WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THIS).

7. KHATIB BEGAN OUR CONVERSATION BY EXPRESSING FEAR THAT ISRAEL IN THE SPRING OR IN THE SUMMER AT THE LATEST WOULD INITIATE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE ARABS WITH A "GREEN LIGHT FROM THE U.S." THIS WOULD BE NECESSITATED BY A VARIETY OF FACTORS INCLUDING ISRAEL'S DIRE ECONOMIC SITUATION, GROWING ISOLATION, DECLINE IN IMMIGRATION, AND LESSENING OF SUPPORT FROM WORLD JEWRY. IN RATHER BLUNT TERMS, I STRESSED TO KHATIB THAT U.S. IN SPITE OF DIFFICULTIES, WAS STRUGGLING TO KEEP DIPLOMATIC PROCESS MOVING. PERSONALLY, I DOUBTED THAT ISRAEL WAS IN THE DESPERATE SITUATION HE DESCRIBED OR, IF IT WERE, THAT RECOURSE TO WAR WOULD BE ITS WAY OF ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE ITS SITUATION. IN ANY CASE, U.S. WOULD, AS IN THE PAST, BE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO INITIATION OF HOSTILITIES BY ANY OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

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8. KHATIB REPORTED SOVIETS ARE URGING HUSSEIN TO ATTEND GENEVA AND THAT KING IS WILLING PROVIDED ENOUGH ARAB STATES URGE HIM TO DO SO.

9. COMMENT: KHATIB APPARENTLY STILL ENJOYS CONFIDENCE OF KING HUSSEIN AND IS REGARDED AS SENIOR JORDANIAN SPOKESMAN IN WEST BANK/EAST JERUSALEM CIRCLES. WHILE SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF WEST BANKERS/EAST JERUSLEMITES MIGHT BE WILLING TO FEDERATE WITH JORDAN AS A WAY TO GET RID OF ISRAELIS, KHATIB APPEARS TO UNDERESTIMATE LIKELY POSITION OF PLO ELEMENTS OUTSIDE OF WEST BANK. AS SEEN FROM HERE, PERES' STATEMENTS REPORTED ABOVE APPEAR DESIGNED TO COERCE WEST BANK COOPERATION IN HIS "SELF-ADMINISTRATION" SCHEME" AS REPORTED EARLIER, WE DOUBT ANY WEST BANKERS OF ANY STATURE (WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF JA' ABARI) WILL GO ALONG WITH GOI PROJECTS.

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